

# Minutes of Public Works Committee

## Tuesday, April 7, 2009

Present: Rob Crowner (Chair), Mike Cann, Guilford Mooring (Superintendent, DPW), Don George, Charlie Moran, Vincent O'Connor, John Spinnetti (Farmers' Market).

### **1. Administrative**

Minutes of 2-3-09: Accepted 3-0-1

Next meeting set for: May 5, 2009, 7:00.

### **2. Old Business:**

#### **Updates:**

Report of Select Board Meeting discussion of Lincoln/Sunset traffic reduction proposal, set for fall '09. Vince O'Connor raised the question: does the Select Board have the power to close roads? PWC had not received plans for the Lincoln/Sunset proposal, so PWC had no position. Discussion of alternatives. Resolved by consensus to postpone discussion, and see how the experiment goes forward.

Report on University Drive reconstruction, south end. Depends on Mass Highway. Town does curbing, MH does paving. Likely summer-fall 09, possible 2010. Amity Street/U-Drive intersection likely to be reconstructed in the summer of 2010.

Stimulus package: so far, nothing for the Town. We should expect the normal Chapter 90 funding for fiscal 2010.

### **3. New Business**

Redesign of Spring Street.

Superintendent Mooring presented plans for the redesign of Spring Street and associated parking west of the Lord Jeff. The plan includes a narrowed roadway (24 feet) and widened sidewalks, with mountable curbs to accommodate the vehicles at the Farmers' Market. Narrower street (24 feet). The plan narrows the present egress on the west, and thereby shortens the north-south pedestrian crossing. Vince O'Connor felt that the mountable curbs were not ideal, and wanted vertical curbing and a wider roadway. Others on the Committee were pleased with the plan. Rob Crowner asked whether the 24 foot roadway was sufficient to accommodate vertical parking. The Superintendent said that it was. The Superintendent noted that the object of the design was to tie in what is happening on the east side of Spring Street to the parking lot. Cost of the paving and curbing and sidewalks: \$60,000.

There was discussion of a new parking meter system for the Spring Street lot that would cost c. \$20,000 and would likely require additional exit monitors (42 @ \$500). The exit monitors would be in-pavement and therefore liable to winter damage. Charlie Moran felt that this item was of lower priority than replacing street lights or repairing existing roads.

The Superintendent presented plans for the reconstruction of the east end of Spring Street. Vince O'Connor asked why the power, cable, and telephone lines could not be put underground. Superintendent Mooring responded that the cost would run close to \$500,000. Mr. O'Connor thought that it could be done for \$100,000. Mr. Moran responded that even this amount was 20% of the total funds available to the town for a year's road repair and construction, and that Amherst was a relatively poor town that could not afford everything. The Amherst College refurbishing and extension of the Lord Jeff is still set to begin in June. The Superintendent plans to begin with drainage, utilities, then sidewalks, then grade. If the College delays beyond June, Mr. Mooring will talk with Jim Brassord of the College and ask them to do the sidewalks—we should not continue to keep Grace Church in limbo.

The Committee did not make a recommendation on the designs of the west and east portions of Spring Street, but will take these up again in May.

#### Ice-B-Gone, Salts, Sand, and Winter Road Clearing.

Superintendent Mooring wants the Committee to look into the relative merits of different materials for controlling snow and ice on Town roads. Vince O'Connor recommended that the Superintendent convene a committee that would include members of PWC but also experts from the area on aquifers, conservation, and biology, to study and recommend. He had given us packets of information that show that sodium chloride (NaCl) is effective. It is what Mass Highway uses, with resultant damage to some wells and water sources. The Town uses a combination of sand and sodium chloride. A good alternative is a mixture of Magnesium Chloride and an organic fluid, as used now by Amherst College and the University of Massachusetts. This mixture, with the trade name of Ice-B-Gone, has several advantages: Magnesium Chloride is less destructive to equipment and environment than Sodium Chloride; fewer applications of Ice-B-Gone would be necessary during the typical year; and at the end of the season there is no expensive sand clean-up necessary. Ice-B-Gone or its equivalent is more expensive than the present salt-sand mixture, but in the Superintendent's view the up-front costs of the material would be more than defrayed by savings in labor and equipment. The Superintendent suggests that the committee suggested by Mr. O'Connor include someone from Aquifer Protection, someone from the Conservation Commission, and he would want to bring in public works personnel from Vermont, New York, and New Hampshire. These states use MgCl plus organic liquid; Massachusetts is among the few that use pure NaCl.

There was some discussion of Cottage Street flooding. Superintendent Mooring said that the causes were bigger storms and a too-small pipe. Before taking action—perhaps the installation of a detention basin or tank—we need to find out what's going on in the whole watershed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00

Respectfully Submitted,

Charlie Moran, Sec'y pro tem.